**Negotiation**



*image from Microsoft Online Clip Art*

This pattern is concerned with establishing the organization forms for negotiation with in a group setting. It is a way of helping to implement the patterns of Group Decision Making, Collaborative Learning and the exemplar of Jigsaw.

**Negotiation is a common method of reaching consensus by accepting tradeoffs within a group setting. The level of structure and understanding of the desired outcome of a negotiation will determine the level of learning and understanding acquired by the group members.**

Negotiations in a learning environment typically take place within a group. Smaller group sizes promote less potential conflict and the increased likelihood of reaching a group consensus. Negotiations can be used to determine:

* Goals or desired outcomes for a lesson/curriculum
* Resources to be used (people, equipment, software, etc)
* Roles and Responsibilities of the group
* Timelines

Negotiation has the potential to “encourage collaboration, interdependence and purposeful sharing of resources and knowledge” (Hansford, D. & Wylie, A. 2002) The underlying forces that drive each member of the group largely influence the act of negotiation. As a result, negotiations could be very predictable or very spontaneous. “The object of negotiation is always cooperation” (Cross 1977 p 585). Relationships are formed as agreements are made between group members.

When setting up a negotiation in a learning environment, it will be important to establish parameters for group members so they can have a common understanding of the task(s) at hand and the expectations the group is to achieve at the end of the negotiation (Cross 1977). Unstructured negotiations run the risk of (for example):

* Discussing/debating over topics out of the control of the group
* Allowing emotional connections to override the purpose of the negotiation
* Long development times, perhaps exceeding the anticipated timeframe or completion date.

At the conclusion of the negotiation, the group should be able to reach a consensus as they develop a single report in order communicate back to the larger group or the instructor their agreements (Hansford, D. & Wylie, A 2002).

**Therefore, start any negotiation by establishing the appropriate group size based on your audience and audience member expertise. Where time is limiting and/or the members of the group are inexperienced in negotiations, the teacher / facilitator should set structure for the negotiation including the goals, timelines and parameters (what is in scope versus not in scope) of the negotiation. Where time is generous and / or the members of the group are more experienced in negotiations, the teacher / facilitator should give general guidance and support, providing a very high-level structure and recommended timelines for completion. To complete a negotiation instruct the group(s) to prepare summary presentations, or something equivalent, to report on agreements made and the rationale for those agreements.**

Patterns needed to complete this pattern include MODERATOR/FACILITATOR, PRESENTATION, GROUP DISCUSSION

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References:

Cross, J. G. (1977). Negotiations as a learning process. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 21(4), 581-606.

Hansford, D. & Wylie, A. (2002). Description of Applying an online "Jigsaw" collaborative learning strategy in an Education subject. Retrieved April 23, 2011 , from Learning Designs Web site: <http://www.learningdesigns.uow.edu.au/exemplars/info/LD30/index.html>